

# ENVIRONMENTALLY SPEAKING 14

Spring 2007 Randwick South Ward Enviro News from Botany Bay Explorers, [www.laperouse.info](http://www.laperouse.info)  
Social Change not Climate Change

## CONGRATULATIONS TO PETER GARRETT ON HIS APPOINTMENT AS MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE AND THE ARTS.



There are developments and practices a plenty in Randwick's South Ward and Botany Bay municipality which deserve the new Minister's scrutiny.

## RANDWICK COUNCIL'S RECREATION NEEDS STUDY AND DRAFT CULTURAL PLAN

The Recreation Needs Study was recently released at the same time as the Draft Cultural Plan. The Cultural Plan, which is available on the Council website/Library, needs input from South Ward residents – some notable events and traditions have not been recorded. The Recreation Needs Study, also available on the website/Library, doesn't feature the diverse range of Sustainable recreation activities for which South Ward is known and which will be of greater importance in the future. However it does identify some major issues:



- Private open spaces at the southern end of the LGA restricting the continuation of the Coastal Walkway to La Perouse.
- Specific land uses in some areas of Randwick City restrict access throughout the LGA, e.g. Port Botany, the Malabar Headland, and private golf course, etc. It is interesting to note that the 'restricted public access' facilities in the southern area of the LGA form a barrier between the residential areas and the foreshore, whilst access to the foreshore in the northern areas is unrestricted. This alone is an important

consideration in the long-term goal of establishing the Coastal Walkway as an uninterrupted trail around the Randwick City coastline.

- There is a need for more cross-Agency communication, e.g. in the La Perouse area due to the number of government agencies involved with the management of the area.
- Those least satisfied with the overall quality of parks and reserves (i.e. rated them as either "Poor" or "Very Poor") were from Phillip Bay or Matraville.
- Bicycle routes not extending across the entire City.
- There are 79 Pocket Parks but none in La Perouse, Phillip Bay and Little Bay

## Port Expansion to cost double estimate in May - \$1billion for capacity of 5.2million

Timing is all. While Kevin Rudd was announcing his new cabinet(November 29), the Premier of NSW took the opportunity to 'advise' NSW taxpayers that the expansion of Port Botany would be costing them \$1 billion not the \$500 million announced 6 months earlier, nor the \$240million estimated 4 years earlier. If taxpayers get out of this one at 10 times the original estimate they can probably count themselves lucky. The announcement of the award of the tender to Baulderstone Hornibrook and Jan de Nul also gave the government the opportunity to slip in another piece of 'advice'. This expansion apparently will double the current capacity of the port. Transport carriers, in submissions to IPART, have argued that the Port is operating well below capacity; both stevedores at the Commission of Inquiry said that on the current footprint they could move in excess of 4 million containers. Even at the approved capacity levels of 1.3 million for each terminal, that brings us to an overall capacity around 5.2 million. The Environmental Impact Statement for the Port was based on a capacity of 3.2million. The Minister's approval was based on 3.2 million so why now talk of 5 million plus when under the NSW Ports Growth Plan Newcastle becomes the next container port after Port Botany reaches 3.2 million.

In Melbourne's *The Age* newspaper Premier lemma is quoted as saying the development will benefit the needs of rural NSW. Really! His Transport Minister is on record as saying that Federal money should be spent in Sydney in preference to investing in a national building project like the Inland Rail through Parkes and other NSW Regional Centres.

There was no comment on the cost doubling and the 60% increase in the cap from the *Southern Courier*, nor the *Sydney(CBD) Morning Herald*; the Herald is too busy promoting a very expensive small town European makeover for the CBD. Cars are not welcome but that

does not include taxis and other commercial vehicles. Emissions from freight related vehicles are expected to increase from 36% to 41% of the total road transport within the next 10 years, but this reality seems to escape the Herald writers. With the end of container shipping on the Harbour they no longer experience the impacts of freight movements and obviously have no problem switching off to what affects the rest of Sydney.

Perhaps that explains why the Herald failed to publish an article on the tragic death of a young man whose vehicle collided with a parked trailer on Foreshore Road on Sunday morning November 18. It was newsworthy for a variety of interstate papers and the photograph below appeared along with a story in the *Daily Telegraph*.



### **HOW MANY TIMES HAVE LOCALS COMPLAINED ABOUT THE DANGERS OF PARKED TRAILERS ON FORESHORE ROAD?**

The Sydney CBD centricism of the Herald is one thing but for this important local item to be all but ignored (a few words in the Police Report) by the Southern Courier is another. It took a letter from a resident in Phillip Bay and a new Southern Courier editor before it finally made it into the letters page of the paper as Letter of the Week 4/12/07.

#### **A Sign of the New Times**

##### **Macau tourist revolt**

Riot police with batons and shields spent five hours on Tuesday (4/12/07) calming down 120 Chinese tourists on a windswept beach in Macau who were protesting angrily to tour guides over an itinerary they said was **too packed with shopping.** (Reuters)

### **IT IS NOT JUST TASMANIA'S ENVIRONMENT THAT SHOULD BE PROTECTED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**

We hear a lot about the pulp mill in Tasmania but in South Ward and Botany Bay municipality we also have dozens of species and communities protected under Commonwealth law. Various marine species around Bare Island are included – the Weedy Sea Dragon, pipefishes, White's Sea Horse (see photo) and many

more live around the Island and whales and dolphins are regular visitors.



The Energy Australia Botany Bay cable from Kurnell to La Perouse will impact an area near Bare Island. Because of the possible impacts on Commonwealth Protected Species, Energy Australia was required to write to the Department of Environment and Water Resources (DEWR) for an assessment of their development. The process is called a 'referral' to the EPBC Act. That referral was written in July 2007. On December 3, 2007 DEWR ceased to exist and staff and sections within this department were incorporated into the Department of Environment, Heritage and The Arts with our local member, Peter Garrett, as Minister. On December 4, still calling themselves DEWR, staff of the former department issued a determination on the Energy Australia referral. The defunct DEWR determined that the Energy Australia development should not be a controlled action. This effectively means that the Commonwealth is happy to let the State Government, in this case the developer, look after all the environmental impacts. The referral that was given to DEWR makes no mention of the significance of the Bare Island environment. Pipefish, seahorses, weedy sea dragons 'may' be found in the area the authors say. Google Bare Island and see photographs taken around Bare Island which testify to the fact that these magnificent creatures are definitely there. That is why Bare Island is such a popular scuba-diving and snorkelling area. While sailboarding and swimming are mentioned as pastimes in Yarra Bay the scuba-diving around Bare Island doesn't rate a mention. As usual the dolphins and whales are down-played. There are no scientific studies conducted just ad hoc observations from National Parks staff, which have been referred to in previous Environmental Assessments of State government developments in Botany Bay.

The State Government has demonstrated that it doesn't value Botany Bay so how do we achieve proper scrutiny of this development from the Commonwealth. Ask the new Minister. The following is from an email sent to him 7/12/07.

*This decision should be declared INVALID because the Department at the time did not officially exist. As the Minister, and also as someone who knows and/or has access to constituents who know Botany Bay, you can have a proper assessment done on this referral. Would you please do this. Would you please send it back to the new Department. Would you then assign one of*

*your staff to properly investigate the situation not simply believe what is in a referral document written by someone employed by the developer - the NSW State Government. As with the other major developments facing Botany Bay - Desal and Port expansion - the DEVELOPER IS THE CONSENT AUTHORITY. The Federal Government is the only body that can provide a proper level of scrutiny. In the case of the Port Expansion there was another body, it was called a Commission of Inquiry, and when the NSW Government got an answer it didn't like it overruled the recommendation. The Commission no longer exists. Peter, this is as much about honesty and transparency in government as it is about protection of biodiversity in Botany Bay. The EPBC Act should be more than a rubber stamp.*

## Little Congwong Beach – How difficult is it to uphold the law?



It is the best children's beach in Botany Bay - in terms of safety, water quality, shelter from sun and wind as well as its bushland setting - but for the present it carries an AO rating. Children from Kooloora Vacation care had a wonderful time there in July – but that was a windy winter's day when the law breakers were absent. Volunteers from Kooloora and other Headland organizations made a start on cleaning up the beach in August and September but that was in a large group. On sunny summer days this is not a beach for families. When it was listed on a Childfriendly website as a place to take children the Police advised the website owners and subsequently the website entry carried a warning for parents not to take their children there.

When the State Government introduced a Bill in 1996 to allow nude bathing at designated beaches – all of which are located in National Parks – it did so to satisfy a small minority who object to wearing a swimming costume when swimming/sunbathing in public places . At the same time the ensuing Act of Parliament also provided certainty for the majority. The nudists had their effectively exclusive beaches so everyone else could rightly assume that ALL other beaches would be free of incidents of "indecent exposure".

In the Southern Courier of 30/4/02 the then NSW premier and local member, Bob Carr, said that the \$370,000 upgrade of Botany Bay National Park – including the new walkway connecting Congwong and Little Congwong beaches – **will make it easier for local families to enjoy one of the most beautiful and culturally significant parks along the east coast.** But despite Mr Carr's good intentions the situation at Little Congwong continued.

In early 2005 the Southern Courier printed a number of letters about this. After a few weeks the editor at the time, Wendy Fitzgibbon, concluded in an editorial(8/2/05): *Families taking their children to any beach in Sydney, including Coogee and Maroubra, would be used to seeing women sunbaking topless. But it is another matter altogether for children to be confronted with male and female genitalia and sexual acts on Little Congwong. There are already five nudist beaches in Sydney under Section 633 of the Local Government Act(1993), so those who wish to sunbathe nude should go there and leave Little Congwong to the local families."*

A change in editor in 2006 brought very different coverage which recently prompted a Little Bay resident to write(20/11/07): *In Australia those who knowingly break the law are supposed to be prosecuted or fined not given half a page of free advertising in your paper.* The Courier has been generous in its coverage of nudists but when sent a report and photographs of children working at the 2007 Clean Up Australia Day in Congwong Bay it didn't consider their story worth printing.

**As with many issues in South Ward it takes time to correct decades of neglect and bad press and for appropriate processes to follow legislation. We are now seeing 'rubbish tips' returned as parkland; footpaths and bicycle tracks are appearing. The present toxic situation is just another issue long overdue for remediation.**

### COMING EVENTS

15 December: Rainforest Walk  
15 December: Botany Bay Workshop  
5 January: Yarra Bay Blessing of the Waters  
18 January: 220<sup>th</sup> Anniversary landing at Phillip Bay  
17 February: Receveur Mass  
2 March: Clean Up Australia Day

#### **La Perouse Rainforest Species Walk: 15 December 9am - 11.00am**

Ever wondered about the rainforest species that inhabit Botany Bay National Park(La Perouse)? Come on a special walk and discover trees of Cheese fruit, Sarsparilla vines, Grapes, Muttonwood, 'seeds' that had sailors from La Perouse's crew retching in agony..and many more. We will start at Happy Valley, Bridge near Anzac Parade and finish back at the National Parks Workshop on the Golf Course Road for a Christmas morning tea. Please bring a plate to share. **RSVP** [laperouseexplorers@hotmail.com](mailto:laperouseexplorers@hotmail.com)

#### **Meeting 12noon: 15 December 2007, Laperouse Museum - How important is Botany Bay**

The Botany Bay Coastal Catchments Initiative (BBCCI) is conducting a workshop to give a brief overview of the BBCCI and to allow you to have your say on how you use/value Botany Bay's waterways (including upstream freshwater catchments), what are the main pressures on them, what management measures you think will help protect the waterways. Contact: John Dahlenburg at (02) 9895 6244 or [bbcci@cma.nsw.gov.au](mailto:bbcci@cma.nsw.gov.au)

**"We have to expect ... if we abuse the earth, nature, we create problems. The earth can protest because it is a living body."** Archbishop Stylianos quoted in the *Sydney Morning Herald* at Epiphany 2005

Each year at Yarra Bay the Greek community celebrates the blessing of the waters. This includes a competition to retrieve a ceremonial silver cross that is thrown into the Bay. It is said that a 'fortunate year' lies ahead for the winner and his family.



The swimmers in 2005: Photo by: Steven Siewert

**Epiphany at Yarra Bay will be held 6 January 2008.**

**18 January 2008** Commemorates the 220<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of entry of the Supply into Botany Bay and the landing of Captain Phillip at Phillip Bay on that afternoon in 1788.

**17 February 2008** marks the 220<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the death of Pere Receveur at La Perouse and as in previous years a special ceremony will be held to mark the occasion at the Laperouse Museum. This will be organized by St. Andrew's Catholic Church in Malabar.



The Laperouse expedition included two Catholic priests, Abbé Jean-Andre Monges and Fr Claude-Francois Joseph Louis Receveur, a Franciscan monk. Pere Receveur served as naturalist and astronomer as well as chaplain. He was also a skilled botanist, geologist, chemist, meteorologist, and philologist - as close as one could get to being an ecologist in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Receveur sustained an injury in the Samoan Islands which in the log was described as a "violent contusion of the eye". On January 23, 1788 Laperouse arrived at Botany Bay and as the English were erecting their first camp at Farm Cove a few days later the French made theirs around Frenchman's Beach. Pere Receveur did not recover from the wound he received and died on February 17<sup>th</sup>. Consequently he holds the distinction of being the first French man, first Catholic priest and first scientist to be buried in Australian soil. His obsequies were the first Catholic religious ceremony held in Australia. This is the first occasion, of which there is reasonable evidence, of a Mass being celebrated in Australian territory. The Laperouse Museum collection includes the Altar Stone used by Receveur and the preserved Eucalypt Tree Trunk which marked his grave.

*After breakfast we visited the grave of the French abbé who died whilst the Count de Peyrouse was here. It was truly humble indeed, being distinguished only by a common head-stone, stuck slightly into the loose earth which covered it. Against a tree, just above it, was nailed a board, with the following inscription on it:*

HIC JACET  
LE RECEVEUR  
EX F. F. MINORIBUS GALLIA SACERDOS  
PHYSICUS IN CIRCUMNAVIGATIONE MUNDI  
DUCE D. DE LA PEYROUSE.  
OBIIT DIE 17th FEBR. ANNO 1788.

*As the painting on the board could not be permanent, Governor Phillip had the inscription engraved on a plate of copper and nailed to the same tree; and at some future day he intends to have a handsome head-stone placed at the grave. We cut down some trees which stood between that on which the inscription is fixed and the shore, as they prevented persons passing in boats from seeing it. (from Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales, November 1788, by John White, Chief Surgeon for the first fleet and first settlement )*

**2 March 2008 CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY**



Join with the La Perouse Headland Coastcare Alliance on March 2, 2008 in cleaning up Congwong Bay. Come between 0800 and 1200 to the Snake Pit, Cann Park, La Perouse (opposite the bus terminus on Anzac Parade). Register at <http://events.cleanup.org.au/?Congwong+Bay>

On the day please wear a hat, sunscreen and protective clothing - long sleeve shirts, long pants, gardening gloves, sturdy shoes - and bring water. All children must be accompanied by an adult.

*Wishing readers a safe and happy Christmas*

*Lynda Newnam, December 2007*